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THE ROUND TABLE

A LITERARY LABORATORY PERIOD

How can we instil a love of good literature into high-school pupils, so that this love will function in later life? The author makes the following suggestions:

A supervised library period is held once each week in the classroom. Before entering this period, each pupil obtains from any library a book selected from a list of works recommended by the teacher. The pupil brings the book to class and reads it *there*—not elsewhere. A different type of literature is read each month: play, novel, essay, short-story, narrative poem, or biography, the teacher making a choice of five per term to suit the needs of the class. After the completion of an act, a chapter, a canto, or what not, the pupils write brief, rough memoranda of its contents. These notes are compiled into a review and criticism, which is written then and there, in class, under the guidance of the teacher during the last library period of each month. If the book is too lengthy to be read in but three class periods as much of it may be read outside of class as shall insure a proper understanding; if it is brief, two or three other works of a similar character may be read.

Before instituting the plan, the teacher should discuss briefly during each period for at least a week its purposes, operation, and advantages. He should then propose this delightful entertainment as an important phase of the work of the term and explicitly and frankly ask the pupils to help him make the plan a success. Then he should post or distribute the lists of books, arranged according to types.

In the selection of these lists of books the teacher must carefully consider the age, grade, sex, mental maturity, attainments, and interests of the pupils. Vital criteria in making these lists, too, should be of literary value, and interest of content, confirmed by the instructor's experience and by the experience of the children themselves. High-school syllabi and books on methods suggest some excellent material. Of course, the lists must be sufficiently extensive, diversified, and flexible, not only to provide for each pupil on register, but also to allow latitude for tastes and to stimulate browsing among bookshelves. Sometimes, to foster the latter practice, a list of authors is given instead of a list of books.

Throughout the following weeks, during another class period, one report a day may be read by each pupil in turn. Or at any succeeding stage of the term, a student's report, written on the blackboard, from memory, may be required as a review exercise in composition. Space does not permit the mention of the great variety of other class procedures which such subject-matter will suggest to the resourceful teacher.

The following table suggests the duties and responsibilities of both pupils and teacher during the period:

	Teacher	Pupil
First period	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Discusses how to read a book with profit (b) Advises how to take notes (c) Supervises (a) and (b) while reading is begun 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Announces name and author to class or teacher (b) Reads (c) Takes rough notes (d) Gets help from teacher
Second period	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Gives help to individuals (b) Examines notes (c) Speeds up or retards (d) Encourages (e) Discusses a requirement not clearly grasped by a number of the class 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Asks questions (b) Reads (c) Continues taking notes
Third period	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Cautions pupils to plan the reading so as to be able to finish it in class the next time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Begins to collate notes (b) Begins to plan an outline for the report (c) Continues the reading
Fourth period	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Briefly analyzes and reviews the plan and contents of a model criticism with the class (b) Passes about the room helping pupils in the writing of the criticism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Finishes reading (b) Writes criticism (c) Exchanges for revision with those classmates who have finished (d) Submits final draft to teacher

Some general rules for the conduct of the period must be observed. For instance, do not make the report a fetish or a burden; make its real purpose, indeed, seem secondary in order that the delights of reading may have full sway. Be assured that the success of this type of lesson lies in your ability to help the pupil select a book that suits him, to have him bring it to class, and to instil in him the idea that he is going to economize and capitalize his time. Then, having gotten him fairly started, help him cheerfully, carefully, inspiringly. Every pupil will respond with whole-hearted appreciation.

Then a written report on each work read is required from each student. This report should be brief—only from two hundred to four hundred words in length. Approximately three-fourths of it should deal with the subject-matter of the book read and the remainder with an expression of how the reader likes the book, and why. Brief model criticisms of each type studied should be culled from critical reviews and magazines, or from excellent student themes. These models should be posted by the teacher, examined by the students, and then reviewed during the last laboratory period of the month.

The variety and range of the English course can thus be immensely enhanced. Functional English in all its aspects may be brought into play: the critical faculty, the art of condensation, the utilization of the valuable subject-matter provided, the responsibilities of defending a point of view—all these in manifold permutation are realizable, and fruitfully so. And to the teacher of English who possesses vision and who places the inculcation of character above the satisfaction of immediate needs, the advantages of the foregoing process are obvious. Indicate to the pupil the scope and power of your subject, and he will respond readily and sincerely to its influence over him, not only now, but, better still, after he is of the world.

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GROUP WORK IN THE COMPOSITION CLASS

In oral and written composition the class as a unit and as individuals must acquire the knowledge of what constitutes intelligent constructive criticism before the result can be a constantly growing power to produce finer workmanship. Just how to bring about this desirable condition is the problem confronting the teacher. She may painstakingly check set after set of papers and may or may not require pupils to make minute corrections; she may spend many class and conference periods showing pupils where weaknesses occur in the oral composition, but at the end of the semester there will have been only a perfunctory sort of growth. That spontaneous, vivifying development which comes when the child has set his own goal and has striven with all his might to reach it will be lacking.

The experiment related below helped one teacher to partially solve her problem in awakening in her boys and girls the consciousness of exact points of improvements needed together with the desire and effort to accomplish this.